



At Children's Musical Theater, Everyone Gets a Chance.

Posted by [Pierluigi Oliverio](#) on Monday, August 20, 2007

I was invited to attend the musical "Leader of the Pack" performed by the local Children's Musical Theater (CMT) in the San Jose Civic Auditorium. Over the past year, I have attended a few of CMT's productions. What specifically caught my eye during "Leader of the Pack" was a young girl who performed in a wheelchair. At first I thought the wheelchair might be part of the story, but I soon realized that she was a cast member who was disabled. She still participated with limited body movement and singing.

I was intrigued with her performance. She wore different costumes, depending on the scene, like the other actors in the play. I was thinking to myself about how gracious CMT was by giving this girl the opportunity to be included with the rest of the cast. I later found out that CMT actually casts every single child who auditions, regardless of level of talent or ability to pay.

CMT is the nation's largest musical theater. It is fiscally sound and produces outstanding performances. In a year where many nonprofits are struggling or have used funds illegally, CMT sets a positive example for others to follow. CMT gives youth an opportunity to channel their artistic energy, which contributes to raising children's self esteem. The children in CMT are ethnically and socio-economically diverse. CMT allows artistic talent to blossom and many of CMT's alumni go on to perform at college and even start theatrical careers in New York and Chicago and in film.

In addition, many of the children who perform for CMT are from San Jose's neighboring cities like Cupertino, Los Gatos and Saratoga. Since CMT shows are held in the heart of San Jose, they bring families and suburbanites downtown, providing economic benefits to restaurants.

I usually attend performances at the Rep, San Jose Stage and City Lights—not children's theaters. However, since taking office, I have attended children's theater at Willow Glen Children's Theater (at Willow Glen Middle School) and San Jose Children's Musical Theater (at Kirk Community Center) in addition to the CMT. The performances are fun and, more importantly, they give youth an opportunity to color their pallet.